Workbench Patch 732 20200310 Test

Thao Do | July 2020

Perhaps you enjoy working with your hands on projects that will be around for years to come. Or maybe you're looking for a job that pays well and has a promising future. These are among the many reasons to consider a career in construction.

In June 2018, there were 263,000 job openings in the construction industry, according to preliminary estimates from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS). Through 2026, BLS projects faster-than-average employment growth in the industry. What's more, its median annual wage of $45,820 in 2017 surpassed the $37,690 median wage for all industries.

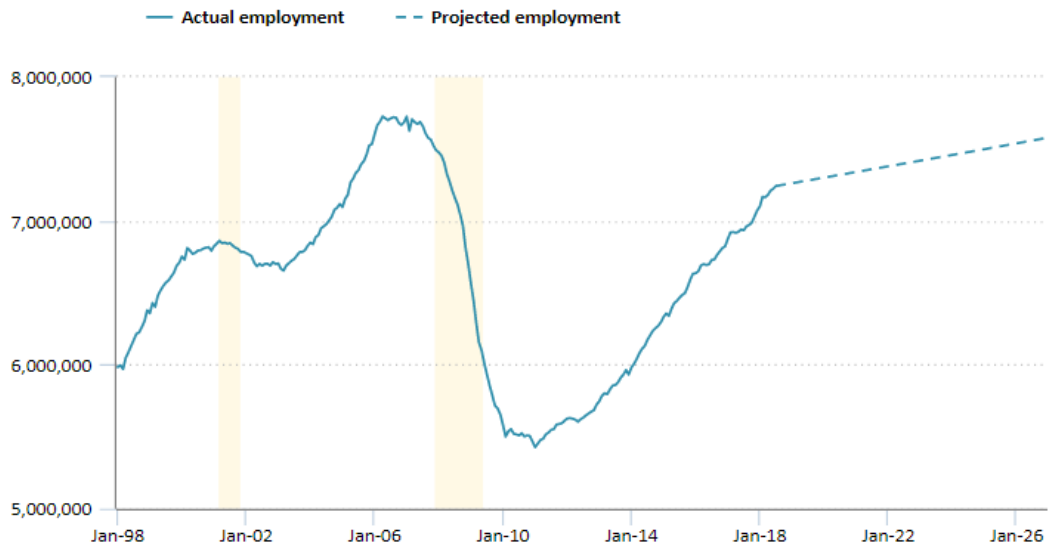
And although some occupations in the construction industry typically require a college degree, you can enter many others with a high school diploma or less education. Read on to learn about construction careers.

Workbench Patch Post Rebounding employment

Preliminary BLS data show that there were 7.2 million construction jobs in July 2018. That marks the highest employment level for the construction industry in a decade.

Leading into and through the Great Recession, the industry experienced declines in employment. In recent years, however, employment has trended upward. (See chart 1.)

Chart 1. Construction industry employment, January 1998–July 2018 (seasonally adjusted) and projected 2026



Note: BLS does not project specific data for each of the interim years to the 2026 projection point. These years are expressed as a dashed straight line. Data for June and July 2018 are preliminary.
Shaded areas denote Recession as determined by the National Bureau of Economic Research.

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Employment Statistics survey (1998–2018 nonfarm wage and salary employment, seasonally adjusted) and Employment Projections program (2026 projected employment).

BLS expects continued expansion of employment in the construction industry, with more than 7.5 million jobs projected by 2026 as population growth spurs demand for new buildings and infrastructure.

Occupations by subsector

The construction industry comprises three subsectors: specialty trade contractors, construction of buildings, and heavy and civil engineering construction. Employment in all of these subsectors is projected to grow over the 2016–26 decade, with more than half (485,600) of the new jobs overall expected in specialty trade contractors. Construction of buildings and heavy and civil engineering construction are projected to add 170,300 and 208,800 jobs, respectively. Wages vary by occupation.

The tables in this section show selected occupations in each of the construction subsectors. There is overlap among the occupations in each, so inclusion in one table doesn't mean exclusion from another. For example, construction laborers work in all three subsectors.

Specialty trade contractors

Specialty trade contractors is the largest construction subsector, with employment projected to reach nearly 4.8 million by 2026. Workers in this subsector usually focus on a particular activity, such as plumbing or roofing. (See table 1.)

Table 1. Specialty trade contractors: employment, outlook, and wages
Employment, 2016 and projected 2026, and median annual wages, 2017, in selected occupations

Occupation	Employment, 2016	Employment, projected 2026	Median annual wage, 2017
Electricians	445,000	491,700	$52,170
Plumbers, pipefitters, and steamfitters	312,300	372,900	51,730
Heating, air conditioning, and refrigeration mechanics and installers	219,600	262,500	45,550
Roofers	107,600	121,100	39,090
Sheet metal workers	86,000	96,200	49,550
Helpers--electricians	65,900	72,800	30,230
Brickmasons and blockmasons	55,100	61,800	48,960
Helpers--pipelayers, plumbers, pipefitters, and steamfitters	43,600	52,100	29,440
Glaziers	37,300	42,000	43,520
Tile and marble setters	29,800	33,600	42,160

Note: Occupations are not exclusive to this industry and may be employed in greater or fewer numbers in other construction subsectors.

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Office of Occupational Statistics and Employment Projections. Wage data exclude self-employed workers.

BLS projects rapid employment growth in specialty trade contractors for all of the occupations in the table. With nearly 20-percent increases in this subsector, employment of heating, air conditioning, and refrigeration mechanics and installers and helpers of pipelayers, plumbers, pipefitters, and steamfitters is projected to grow the fastest of these occupations. Electricians had the highest median annual wage, $52,170, in this subsector in 2017.

Construction of buildings

Employment in construction of buildings is projected to be about 1.7 million in 2026. This subsector includes general contractors and other establishments that have primary responsibility for an entire building or remodeling project. (See table 2.)

Table 2. Construction of buildings: employment, outlook, and wages
Employment, 2016 and projected 2026, and median annual wages, 2017, in selected occupations

Occupation	Employment, 2016	Employment, projected 2026	Median annual wage, 2017
Carpenters	329,400	357,800	$45,680
Construction laborers	227,300	259,600	35,340
Construction managers	99,200	113,100	90,380
Cost estimators	39,500	45,100	66,250
Cement masons and concrete finishers	23,900	27,200	44,480
Painters, construction and maintenance	22,000	25,200	38,240
Civil engineers	19,900	22,600	77,680
Helpers--carpenters	18,200	20,800	30,710
Structural iron and steel workers	15,800	17,900	50,920
Drywall and ceiling tile installers	10,500	12,000	42,860

Note: Occupations are not exclusive to this industry and may be employed in greater or fewer numbers in other construction subsectors.

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Office of Occupational Statistics and Employment Projections. Wage data exclude self-employed workers.

All but one of the occupations in table 2 (carpenters) are projected to have faster-than-average employment growth in this subsector from 2016 to 2026. Employment in each of the other occupations in the table is projected to grow by about 14 percent in this subsector. Construction managers had the highest pay of the occupations in table 2, with a median annual wage of $90,380 in construction of buildings in 2017.

Heavy and civil engineering construction

Heavy and civil engineering construction focuses on highway, utility, and other infrastructure projects; employment in this subsector is projected to be almost 1.2 million in 2026. Table 3 shows some of the occupations involved in this work.

Table 3. Heavy and civil engineering construction: employment, outlook, and wages
Employment, 2016 and projected 2026, and median annual wages, 2017, in selected occupations

Occupation	Employment, 2016	Employment, projected 2026	Median annual wage, 2017
Operating engineers and other construction equipment operators	103,200	126,100	$51,180
Heavy and tractor-trailer truck drivers	39,400	47,300	41,070
Electrical power-line installers and repairers	33,600	46,500	60,320
Paving, surfacing, and tamping equipment operators	19,300	22,400	39,160
Pipelayers	18,100	22,900	36,950
Telecommunications line installers and repairers	17,100	23,700	42,210
Welders, cutters, solderers, and brazers	16,400	20,400	54,760
Mobile heavy equipment mechanics, except engines	12,800	15,400	48,810
Excavating and loading machine and dragline operators	9,700	12,000	41,280
Earth drillers, except oil and gas	8,600	11,000	42,110

Note: Occupations are not exclusive to this industry and may be employed in greater or fewer numbers in other construction subsectors.

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Office of Occupational Statistics and Employment Projections. Wage data exclude self-employed workers.

BLS projects much-faster-than-average employment growth in heavy and civil engineering construction over the 2016−26 decade for the occupations shown in table 3. Employment growth of electrical power-line installers and repairers is expected to be the fastest, with a projected increase of nearly 39 percent in heavy and civil engineering construction. These installers and repairers also had the highest median annual wage, $60,320, of occupations shown in the table.

Paving the way to a career

Most construction careers require specific skills and aptitudes, such as dexterity, physical stamina, and problem-solving ability. Construction workers learn many of the skills they need on the job. In fact, all but one of the occupations shown in the tables typically require on-the-job training for workers to become competent.

Apprenticeships are common in some occupations, such as sheet metal workers and plumbers. In other occupations, new workers may get informal on-the-job training, including instruction from those who have experience.

Whether you have little formal education or you aspire to earn a college degree, you can choose from a number of occupations in construction. For example, occupations such as roofers and carpenters' helpers typically require no formal educational credential at the entry level. And you can typically enter more than half of the occupations shown in the tables with a high school diploma or its equivalent, such as a GED.

You typically need a certificate or other postsecondary nondegree award to enter the occupations of heavy and tractor trailer truck drivers and heating, air conditioning, and refrigeration mechanics and installers. The three

highest paying occupations in the tables—construction managers, cost estimators, and civil engineers—typically require a bachelor's degree for entry.

For more information

Find detailed information about entry requirements, job outlook, and more for these occupations—and hundreds of others—in the Occupational Outlook Handbook. Data on the physical, mental, and cognitive demands; environmental conditions; and vocational-preparation requirements in these occupations are available from the Occupational Requirements Survey.

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